

The Implications of Dialogue Journals in the Art Classroom

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Despite the enactment of No Child Left Behind (2002), many urban school districts continue to battle the achievement gap and struggle with low literacy rates. Authentic writing instruction, a main component of literacy, is being cut in those districts that struggle most to accommodate other demands made by the nation and state. The primary purpose of this study was to determine if the use of dialogue journals in the art classroom could effectively and unobtrusively increase the amount of time students spent authentically writing. Second, journals were analyzed to see if they contained information on student interests and cultural backgrounds that could be incorporated into art instruction. This research was performed over the course of two weeks with eight English as a Second Language third graders enrolled in a low-income and racially diverse urban elementary school. While the outcomes have helped establish a motivating and easily implemented writing program that can be used in the art room, they have also positively contributed to the existing curriculum by revealing information regarding student interests and cultural backgrounds.

Literacy is a key component of success in today's society. Illiterate adults struggle daily while attempting to complete even the most mundane tasks. Low literacy rates in a community are often correlated with lower incomes, higher crime rates, and poorer health (Literacy Volunteers of Buffalo and Erie County, 2009). It has been well documented that illiteracy affects urban centers much more than suburban/affluent communities. As a result, an achievement gap exists between urban and suburban schools. Urban school districts are in a constant struggle to overcome external factors and produce literate students so that the quality of life in their communities may increase. For many urban students the educational setting may be their only safe haven and only chance at learning. What can be done in urban schools to overcome the achievement gap and overcome the challenges that these students face? What can be done so that these children have a chance at becoming successful, contributing members of society? The answer begins with finding ways to increase literacy in the nation's poorest cities.

In an attempt by the U.S. government to overcome all existing achievement gaps, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) was designed and put into place. Since then, educational standards have been raised and national assessments have been created to measure student growth in the English Language Arts (ELA), where the heart of literacy instruction takes place. Results from ELA assessments directly affect the amount of funding schools receive along with what ELA

curriculums they must follow. Reading First (RF) is the curriculum that was designed by the government to meet the needs of low performing schools. It is now mandated in many urban districts nationwide. Assessments that have been performed since the beginning of NCLB and RF show that literacy rates among urban students still need to increase because the achievement gap still exists between urban and suburban schools (Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008). Those involved in the field of urban education are in search of new ways to help their students thrive.

Through critical examination of the Reading First (RF) curriculum, it is shown that the program focuses exclusively on reading skills. Although it is recognized across the educational community that writing instruction and the use of relevant, authentic experiences are key components of literacy growth, RF leaves writing instruction out completely and the texts that are mandated through the program are unconnected to the lives of the learners it serves.

Because many schools have lengthened the amount of time they spend teaching RF each day, they have had to shorten the amount of time spent on other subject areas. As a consequence, students are losing out on critical domain specific experiences that they need to comprehend different types of texts. With daily schedules and curriculum regulations so tight there needs to be something that can easily be integrated into daily instruction as to increase the amount of time spent on writing in authentic contexts. Dialogue journals are one way this can be accomplished. If used consistently, they could have the potential to strengthen core knowledge and increase literacy at the same time.

As an urban, elementary art teacher I have been provided the unique opportunity of creating my own curriculum. It is my strong belief that writing can and should be incorporated into my daily practice so that students can gain authentic experiences communicating about themselves and about art through written language. Over the past two years I have struggled with ways to effectively do this without taking time away from art instruction. I have created writing assignments at the end of projects designed to have students reflect upon their art or the work of others, but it has always been a struggle to increase the time students spend on writing.

The purpose of this study was to determine if the regular use of dialogue journals could unobtrusively be incorporated into my art classroom as a way of increasing the amount of time students spent authentically writing. The secondary purpose was to see if student motivation to write would rise and if students would naturally gravitate towards discussions on art.

Research Questions

Will the use of dialogue journals in a third grade, urban classroom unobtrusively increase the amount of time students writing in an authentic context? Will students show increased motivation to write in the art room as a result of dialogue journals? Will dialogue journals provide the teacher with opportunities to informally teach new material, urge students to analyze and reflect upon art, and find out relevant information regarding student interest and cultural backgrounds?

The work of theorists, William Glasser and Alfie Kohn, support the use of dialogue journals in the classroom. Glasser discusses the importance of creating positive classroom environments to foster student learning. His beliefs are that positive environments consist of ones that promote, “survival, love and belonging, power and respect, freedom, and fun” (William Glasser Institute, 2010). Because they are unscripted, the teacher can use dialogue journals to effectively support each of the conditions Glasser provides. Kohn states that providing students with choices is a key component to success in the classroom (Kohn, 2010). With dialogue journals being unstructured, written conversations between teacher and student, the child has endless choices on where they would like the conversations to go or what topics they would like to write about. Through the use of dialogue journals, children will be engaged in authentic learning experiences and behaviors will be curbed as to allow all involved a chance at education. In a positive classroom environment students will be more likely to engage in writing and open up with the information they provide.

It was expected that students would be motivated to write because the writing was directly relevant to their lives and because they were receiving one on one attention from their instructor. It was also believed that students would be inclined to write about art because they were being time to write during art class and communicating with their art teacher. It seemed that art would be a natural topic for discussion.

If students did naturally veer towards discussions on art it would show that dialogue journals could be used in the art room as a vehicle for teaching new material, for urging students to analyze and reflect upon their own work and the work of others, and for finding out more about student art interests, personal interests, and cultural backgrounds. The latter use would provide me as their instructor, ideas and material for creating meaningful daily instruction that was directly related to the lives of my learners.

Literature Review

Literacy has been defined by Hemphill and Tivnan (2008) as the ability to read and write while understanding that print communicates meaning and represents oral speech. Reading, writing, and oral language are the foundational components of literacy (Freidus, Grose, & McNamara, 1997). The three areas are completely intertwined and development in one area facilitates development in the other two (Freidus et al., 1997). Many authors view literacy as the foundation for success in school and for success in life (Bitter, Gubbins, O'Day, & Socias, 2009). This study looks at literacy from the same standpoint as the above-mentioned professionals and is in search of a way to increase writing among urban school children in the art room.

Stronger insight into the problem at hand will be provided by reviewing research that discusses the causes and effects of literacy rates among urban school children. With writing a minimal focus of struggling urban schools, the research cited here will also look into how writing instruction can successfully be implemented into the current curriculum. In particular, the use of writing journals will be examined. Background knowledge on all of these topics will be presented as they were necessary for the study to be completed.

It has been shown again and again that the first years of school hold significant impact on a child's development as a lifelong reader and writer (Hoffman, Paciga, & Teale, 2007). Reading, writing, and oral language comprise the three main components of literacy and it is critical that their separate skills are enhanced and taught together (Evers, Lang, & Smith, 2009). With oral language and other emergent literacy skills developing early in a child's education, the three factors must be addressed immediately (Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008; Hoffman et al., 2007). Equal importance should be placed on each as they lay the foundations for later literacy (Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008; Hoffman et al., 2007).

Figueredo and MacDonald (2010), authors of "Closing the Gap Early: Implementing a Literacy Intervention for At-Risk Kindergartners in Urban Schools," have proven that reading and writing instruction should be focused around the primary experiences that students take part in first hand. They believe that this allows students the opportunity to fully make sense of what they are learning (Figueredo & MacDonald, 2010). Many other authors agree with Figueredo and MacDonald and state in their own research the importance of using authentic texts and writing experiences when teaching students to become literate (Evers et al., 2009; Gipe, 1992;

Gipe, 1993; Hoffman et al., 2007; Indrisano & Paratore, 1994). For this reason, the texts that teachers use should be related to the learner's lives and the knowledge they are accruing in other subject areas (Hoffman et al., 2007). Gipe (1993) and Hoffman, Paciga, and Teale (2007) go as far as reporting that encompassing all subject areas into literacy instruction is a fundamental part of increasing long term literacy growth. They believe that it is important students have strong background knowledge in many areas so they can connect to the variety of texts and writing genres that are available (Gipe, 1993; Hoffman et al., 2007).

While strong emphasis should be put on reading, writing, and language acquisition through the use of authentic materials, other factors are found to contribute to literacy growth as well. Acting as an active participant in the learning process, the educator plays a vital role in helping a child increase their literacy skills (Bitter et al., 2009). The use of higher level questioning by educators has been positively associated with literacy growth (Bitter et al., 2009). A teacher that effectively uses assessment results to tailor instruction can be a great influence on the growth that a child achieves (Freidus et al., 1997).

Even with all we know about increasing literacy rates, many discrepancies continue to exist. A large achievement gap is still present between urban and suburban students. Achievement gaps, which refers to the disparities in educational performance between different groups of students (Hoffman et al., 2007), have been documented since the 1990's (Li, 2010). Achievement gaps are present between students of different locations, different socio-economic groups, different cultural backgrounds, and different genders (Hoffman et al., 2007).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has shown that existing gaps are larger for urban students than any other group (Hoffman et al., 2007). This is due to the higher percentage of low income students in urban districts (Hoffman et al., 2007). Statistics from the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the National Breakfast Program (NBP) show that over 40% of students in urban schools come from families with income levels low enough to qualify for NSLP and NBP, while only 20% of suburban children do (United States Department of Agriculture, Food, and Nutrition Services [USDA], 2009).

In 2007, 81% of students who were eligible for free lunch and breakfasts were at or below an acceptable literacy level (Li, 2010). ELA assessments throughout the country confirm that children of poverty are more likely to struggle with reading and writing than children of middle and upper class families (Figueredo & MacDonald, 2010; Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008;

Hoffman et al., 2007). A number of reasons have been presented throughout the years to explain these differences.

Many children of low income families enter school without the beginning skills of reading and writing. Often their vocabularies are inadequate because they have lacked exposure to literature (Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008). Literacy Volunteers of Buffalo and Erie County (2009) reports that 61% of low income homes do not have children's books. Low income parents are less likely to engage their children in the conversation and read-alouds that encourage school readiness and literacy skills (Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008). This may be because these parents typically have lower levels of education themselves. 76% of adults that receive public assistance are unable to read more than the simplest texts (Literacy Volunteers of Buffalo and Erie County, 2009). Preschools that low-income children attend frequently lack educational focus due to high teacher-child ratios and less educated staffs (Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008). These factors, along with limited access to rich texts in the community, all contribute to urban children having an inadequate oral language base and lack of emergent literacy skills when they first enter school (Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008; Hoffman et al., 2007).

Other causes for low literacy rates in urban schools are present as well. According to Li (2010), author of "Race, Class, and Schooling," the average urban school has less physical capital than the surrounding suburban schools. This results in a difference in the available resources, school organizations, and curriculum that urban schools provide. Indrisano and Paratore showed in their 1994 research that urban school libraries have fewer resources and few high quality, multicultural children's books. Because urban children hold different background knowledge than suburban children, there is little connection between their lives and the literacy programs they partake in (Gipe, 1993; Hoffman et al., 2007).

Urban districts also have a much higher population of English Language Learners (ELL's) than their suburban counterparts (Teale, 2009). Over the past 15 years the number of ELL's in urban schools has more than doubled and is increasing at seven times the rate of the overall school population (Westervelt, 2007). Many of these student's have not had formal schooling in their home countries and take a considerable amount of time to adjust to American education (Westervelt, 2007). Regardless of their age, they are just learning English, unfamiliar with the test format used in American classrooms, and less likely to succeed on assessments that measure literacy (Indrisano & Paratore, 1994).

In an attempt to lower the achievement gap that has been plaguing America for nearly 20 years, the United States Government created a program known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001. NCLB increased learning standards and forced states to create yearly assessments for all schools to measure literacy growth (New York State Department of Education [NYSED], 2010a). Schools failing to make adequate yearly progress based on their assessment scores were forced into the government conceived, Reading First (RF) curriculum (Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008). Although there has been a slight increase in urban reading scores since NCLB and RF have been put into place, students in urban districts are still not meeting expectations (Hemphill & Tivnan, 2008).

It has been shown that NCLB and RF ignore critical elements of literacy instruction that are proven to lead to success and higher literacy rates (Hoffman et al., 2007). RF is based on just what its name entails, reading first. Comprised of only five pillars (phonological awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) RF fails to address writing instruction (Hoffman et al., 2007). Because of the emphasis states are placing on NCLB assessments, the time struggling districts spend on reading instruction is being increased while time spent on other core subject areas is being decreased. Reading instruction composes 87% of literacy instruction in urban schools leaving writing instruction at only 13% (Bitter et al., 2009).

With reading instruction being given at the expense of instruction in other subject areas, urban students are being shortchanged on domain specific knowledge (Hoffman et al., 2007). The Center for Education's Policy Study of 2007 states that 77% of urban districts have increased ELA time and that 44% of those have reduced time spent on other subject areas since 2002 (Hoffman et al., 2007). In those schools social studies instruction has been reduced by an average of 90 minutes a week and science instruction by 94 minutes a week (Hoffman et al., 2007). This is contributing to low comprehension scores because many texts and genres that students come into contact with depend on vocabulary and domain specific knowledge (Hoffman et al., 2007). The lack of writing instruction and time spent in other subject areas is giving urban teachers the message that reading instruction is exclusively about phonological awareness, decoding, speed, and fluency (Hoffman et al., 2007). The nation, states, districts, and educators must find ways to overcome these challenges and address the gaps in the RF curriculum.

In order to address the present achievement and curriculum gaps that are affecting the literacy rates and success of urban children, writing instruction must be put back into the

curriculum without taking any more time away from important subject areas. Writing journals have been studied as an effective way of providing students with writing instruction, and they can be implemented in virtually all subject areas unobtrusively (Gipe, 1992; Gipe, 1993; Indrisano & Paratore, 1994). Numerous types of journals have been used in classrooms to meet state learning standards, provide authentic writing experiences, allow for differentiated instruction, teach new material, and assess students learning.

Through the use of journals students can be provided the opportunity to choose topics that are relevant to their lives while becoming fully engaged in the writing process (Compton-Lilly, 2009; Evers et al., 2009; Larrotta, 2009). This can give teachers a chance to learn more about their students' backgrounds and interests (Gipe, 1993). When teachers have a better understanding of their students and the cultures they come from, they can create more meaningful learning experiences for them (Li, 2010).

Journals can be adapted for students of varying abilities and for students with special needs by providing more than one prompt that students can choose from (Heuser, 2005). The use of different prompts can easily encourage different levels of thinking (Bitter et al., 2009) and allow for a variance in responses (Britsch & Heise, 2006). Students can add drawings and use their different learning styles to complete journaling activities (Livingston, 2005). Students can also use retelling techniques to show what they have learned and where they still need help (Figueredo & MacDonald, 2010; Larrotta, 2009; Livingston, 2005). Teachers can use journals as a tool for both pre and post assessment when they are presenting a new topic in their classes (Britsch & Heise, 2006; Livingston, 2005). The students' journals can serve as a portfolio so that growth can be easily assessed throughout the year (Indrisano & Paratore, 1994). Writing journals provide an excellent way to increase student motivation for writing and increase student self-worth (Indrisano & Paratore, 1994).

Many different types of writing journals have been documented as successful in the past. Reflective journals and learning logs have been used to increase the level of student thinking as students express their feelings, responses, and questions (Heuser, 2005; Indrisano & Paratore, 1994). Inquiry journals have been used in science classes to provide students with a way to record their observations and formulate questions for further investigation (Westervelt, 2007). Dialogue journals have been used as a means for teachers and students to hold a written conversation with one another (Gipe, 1993; Larrotta, 2009).

Dialogue journals are not intended to be evaluation tools, but rather to create a safe writing environment (Larrotta, 2009). Through the use of dialogue journals students can share their thoughts with their teachers and receive regular, written responses (Larrotta, 2009). They have been used informally to teach language structures (Gipe, 1993), new vocabulary (Larrotta, 2009), and provide ELL's with opportunities to write in English for authentic communication (Larrotta, 2009). MacDonald and Figueredo's (2010) research shows that the most effective way to advance language in children is to engage them in conversations with well-spoken adults. Dialogue journals do just that. It is believed that the more children engage in dialogue journals, the better their writing, reading, and literacy skills as a whole will become (Gipe, 1993).

An achievement gap exists between urban and suburban schools due to many factors. To overcome these factors NCLB and RF have been created by the U.S. government. Unfortunately NCLB and RF are creating a gap in the curriculum instead of addressing the complete needs of the students. Current research indicates that instruction in reading and writing equally contribute to literacy growth, yet the RF program does not provide time for writing instruction. It also fails to connect to the lives of urban students. Inadvertently it takes time away from important subject areas.

All involved in education are looking for ways in which they can fill this curriculum gap and take strides towards increasing literacy rates in urban schools. Writing journals can serve many roles. Most importantly, writing journals can provide students with authentic writing opportunities that are relevant to their lives and tied into the subject matter they are learning. They can bridge the gap and help create a more complete literacy curriculum. This research studied how integrating the use of dialogue journals in the classroom could increase the time students spend writing in the classroom. More specifically, student motivation and the possibilities that dialogue journals hold were analyzed and evaluated.

Method

This study critically examined the use of dialogue journals among eight, third grade ESL students, ranging from ages eight to ten years old. There were five girls and three boys. All of the participants were in the same general education classroom in an urban district of Western New York. Each of the students involved moved to America within the past five years and hence, the English language is reasonably new to them. Much of the research that has been

examined suggests that dialogue journals are especially effective with English language learners and is the reason ESL students were used. The eight ESL students participating were chosen over others in their class solely because of their willingness to participate.

Abdi. Abdi is a very intelligent boy from Kenya. His ELA and math scores are at the top of his class. He gets quickly bored with assignments that he finds too easy and usually finishes assignments well ahead of his peers.

Darya. Darya is from Russia. She has a reserved personality and is a good listener. She takes a while to warm up to others but is very kind and open once she does. She often works quietly on her own and puts a lot of effort into her work.

Fato. Fato is a second-year third grader from Somalia. She needs a lot of one on one attention and redirection when completing tasks. She is very slow to finish her work and is easily distracted by others.

Hawa. Hawa is a playful child from Somalia. She is always laughing and usually off task. She struggles to complete her work but regardless of what trouble she is having, there is always a smile on her face.

Maha. Maha is a bright and optimistic student from Yemen. She shows a natural interest in art but often questions the rationale behind projects and assignments. She is very talkative and popular amongst her classmates.

Mahamudi. Mahamudi is a kind and quiet boy from Kenya. He is Abdi's cousin and looks up to him fondly. He usually lets Abdi speak for him. When he is having difficulty with an assignment he looks to Abdi for help.

Parizoda. Parizoda is from Uzbekistan and very eager to please her teachers. Her hand is always first to go up when questions are asked of the class and she is known to go above and beyond in her assignments. She is extremely thoughtful of others.

Salman. Salman is from Yemen and has an identical twin. He is a perfectionist in all that he does and holds a lot of nervous energy. He often takes his time completing his work, double checks everything before handing it in, and doubts himself once he is finished.

Procedures

Each of the students involved in the study contributed three to five journal entries over a two week period of time at the end of the school year.

The journals were introduced during a thirty-minute art class in which the students were provided time to construct their first entry. I explained that they would be writing journal entries to me and that I would be responding. They were told that they could ask anything they wanted and I would respond the best I could. The students were given a handmade journal made of loose-leaf stapled inside a piece of 12"x18" construction paper that was folded in half. They were provided the opportunity to choose which color they would like and decorate the cover of their journals. After they completed that task they wrote the first entry into their journals with little guidance and zero modeling. They were told that there was no wrong way to write the entry and that they could write about whatever they chose. They were asked to make sure they told something about themselves. At the end of that forty minute period their dialogue journals were collected.

Once the students' journals were collected I responded to their entries by first answering their questions and telling them something about myself, then asking them a question. By ending with a question I was hoping to leave them with something to write about in their next entry. The questions I asked centered on art or their personal interests and cultural backgrounds. Each time I wrote to them I wrote in letter formatted and modeled characteristics of good writing.

Data in this study was collected both formally and informally. Each time the students handed in a journal entry and I responded, the entries were photocopied and set aside for later analysis (Appendixes A-H). Throughout the two weeks behaviors and attitudes regarding the dialogue journals were also observed. Attention was given to students' positive and negative comments regarding the journals.

To begin, the amount of journal entries each student made along with the length of each journal entry was recorded. Each child was credited with five minutes of writing time for every three sentences they wrote. This data was entered into a table similar to the Table 1 below (Appendix I). After the table was complete the average number of entries and time spent writing were calculated (Appendix I).

Table 1: Time Spent Writing

Student Name	Number of Journal Entries Made	Number of Sentences Written	Total Time Spent Writing (# Sentences/3 x 5min)

The contents of the students' journal entries were read over and analyzed to see if they contained information regarding art interests, personal interests, or cultural background (Appendixes A-H). Art interests were highlighted green, personal interests were highlighted purple, and cultural/background information was highlighted blue. Questions and information concerning art that were asked or given by the teacher were also sought out and highlighted yellow. A chart listing each of these categories was created for each student (Table 2). Each time a student made reference to one of the categories in their journal entries, a tally was given and brief description stated (Appendixes J-Q).

Table 2: Journal Analysis Table

Student Name:		
Information Contained in Journal	Number of Times Referenced in Journal	Comments
Art Interests		
Personal Interests		
Cultural Background		
Questions/Information on Art from Teacher		

After all data was collected from the journals and “Journal Analysis Tables” were completed, the data was critically dissected in search of possible journal and lesson implications. Student attitudes towards journaling were also examined.

Findings

Once the data was inserted in to Table 1 (Appendix I), it was found that students spent an average of twenty-seven minutes, writing four journal entries over a two week period. In the past, students had spent thirty minutes writing in the art room every eight weeks. This meant that students were only writing seven and a half minutes every two weeks. By integrating dialogue journals into the art curriculum, the amount of time students spent writing quadrupled.

Because students were writing at home and during free time, no time was taken from art-making activities. Dialogue journals proved to add to the curriculum without taking any time away from already in place practices.

By observing the comments students made throughout the study, an overall positive student attitude was unveiled. Often I would see students in the hall and they would be visibly excited to give me their journal. Once the journals were returned, the students would immediately rush to open them and read my responses. Afterwards, the students would be bubbling over with questions to ask me or new information they wanted to share. On occasion I would enter their classroom to collect the journals and students would rush to write an entry before I left. When told they could bring it to me later, they would make remarks that showed they were anxious to hand it in and receive another response. The students looked forward to having their journals returned and were motivated to write.

The only negative remarks that came from students were when they had forgotten their journals at home or when it took me more than a few hours to respond. As a whole, the students reacted very positively to the use of dialogue journals.

Upon the first inspection of student journals, it was found that they contained four main areas of content: Student Art Interests, Student Personal Interests, Cultural Background Information, and Art Questions/Information Given by the Teacher. The journals held the most information regarding student art interests. There were a total of eighteen references to art in the student entries and eighteen mentions of art from the teacher. Information on personal interests

and cultural background occurred about equally. Personal interests were of topic eleven times and cultural backgrounds were discussed ten times.

As predicted, the students naturally gravitated towards discussions on art and their past experiences. The dialogue journals provided an excellent opportunity to find out about student interests and prior knowledge, spark their interest in upcoming projects, and teach them new or extra art information. By asking the students questions regarding art, their interests and past experiences were easily extracted. All of the information the students provided was of high quality and could easily direct or be integrated into the art curriculum.

The data that was gathered from the student dialogue journals led to many ideas that could be used in lesson planning. By focusing instruction around student interests and cultural background information they provided, instruction could be designed to activate prior knowledge, tie in past experiences, and meet their needs.

Abdi stated that he liked to draw. Darya discussed jewelry, and family celebrations. Fato showed an interest in color, and Hawa an interest in cats. Maha talked about her love of drawing, decorating, writing, and physical activity while Mahamudi declared he liked making paper kites and drawing. He explained the specifics of what he likes to draw including ninjas, dragons, houses, schools, people, trains, buses, cats, and animals. Parizoda's writing clearly showed her appreciation for art. When information was shared with her on the artist Wassily Kandinsky, who is from an area near her home country, she showed immediate interest. Lastly, Salman wrote about of his Arabic and Yemenis background, along with his interests in video games, computers and math. Many of the students shared that they liked spending time outside with their families and I provided a number of them with information regarding ceramics and being an art teacher.

As an employee of this urban district I am required to teach the students a unit on drawing, on painting, on three-dimensional works of art, and on graphic design throughout the year. I am free to construct and implement any lessons that fit into those categories. Using the information provided by the students, I would begin by creating a drawing lesson that consisted of drawing landscapes with favorite places such as the park or favorite things such as animals or trains as the focus. For a painting lesson, I would design a project where the students learned about color and painted to music just as the artist Kandinsky did. To fit the three-dimensional art requirement, I would have students examine reasons for adornment and then design and create

their own three-dimensional clay jewelry. Lastly, using printmaking techniques, I would have students create paper kites to fit the graphic design requisite. Throughout these four projects I would actively tie in each student's past experiences and cultural connections.

Conclusions

The research that I have performed throughout this study has proven to be very beneficial to my practice. I began with a literature review in which I examined the well known achievement gap that exists between urban and suburban schools. In search of reasons why the gap exists, I concluded that there is an evident need to increase the amount of time spent writing in urban schools. I began looking for ways to increase student writing opportunities and discovered dialogue journals. By implementing the use of dialogue journals with my third grade art class I discovered that they unobtrusively increase the amount of time my students spend relevantly writing. The use of dialogue journals also provide me with insight into the interests and backgrounds of the students I teach.

The amount of information the students supplied regarding their art interests was astounding. By using the dialogue journals in my art room I have unveiled a wealth of information to help me design a curriculum that is directly related to the lives of my learners. In the upcoming school year I plan to use the journals beginning the very first day and then design my lessons around the information my students provide. I also look forward to sharing my findings with others in my field so that they too can make positive changes.

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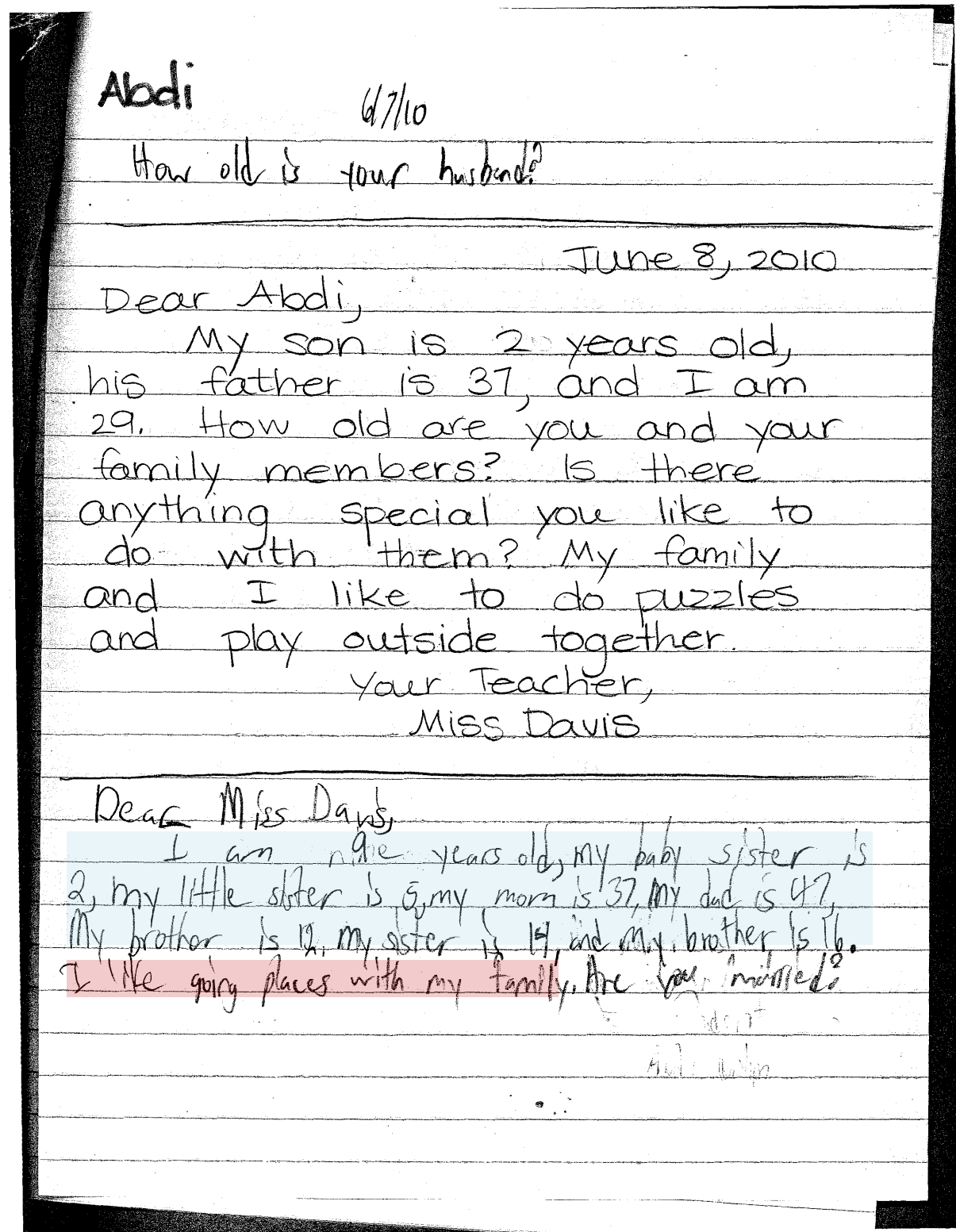
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Appendixes

Appendix A: Abdi's Journal Entries



June 9, 2010

Dear Abdi,

You have a big family! It must be a lot of fun always having someone to play with!

I only have 2 brothers and they are much older than me so when I was growing up I was always bored at home. Even now my family is small. I am not married. I live at home with just my son and I.

We like to go places together too! We go to the park, zoo, and to visit friends a lot. What kinds of places do you like to go to with your family?

Sincerely,
Miss Davis

June 9, 2010

Dear Miss Davis,

I go to the store with my family a lot.
You have a small family. My dad goes places to fix the car.
I go to my cousins house every Sunday.
Do you have a car that is a Honda? Who is your
favorite artist?

Sincerely,
Abdi Salim

June 18, 2010

Dear Abdi,

I like going to the store.
Most of all I like going
the grocery store. Whenever
we go there we always
come home and have a
really good dinner! We often
go in my car but I do
not drive a Honda, I drive
a white Nissan.

I have a lot of favorite
artists. There are too many
to even say. My favorite
kind of art is ceramics.

Ceramics is when you
make things out of clay.

What is your favorite
part of art?

Your teacher,

MISS DAVIS

I like to draw. I draw lots of things
at school. Are you happy that school is going to end?

Sincerely,
The Student

Appendix B: Darya's Journal Entries

Darya

What I look like 6/7/10

I have black hair. I have brown eyes. I have golden earrings. I have two bicitiles on my hand almost every day. I am tan.

June 8, 2010

Dear Darya,

Thank you for telling me about yourself! After reading what you wrote I am wondering why you wear your two bracelets almost every day. Are they special to you?

I have a special bracelet that my mom gave to me. It has two giraffes on it. She bought it for me because she knows I love giraffes. Giraffes are my favorite animal. I have seen them at the zoo but I would love to see them in the wild. Do you have a favorite animal?

Your teacher,
Miss Davis

About my birthday 6/9/10
On my birthday I bought cake and stuff
I need for my birthday. Then my Mom and
dad called every body for my birthday. Then we
cooked food and got ready for my birthday.
Then every one came to my birthday. Then I
put the music on when I was done eating.
Every body started to dance and talk, scream and
play.

June 10, 2010

Dear Danya,

Did you get the bracelets
for your birthday? If so, who
gave them to you? I love
birthday parties. They are so
much fun!

Sincerely,
Miss Davis

6/10/10

Dear Miss. Davis,

I have a lot of cousins. Do you have any cousins. It's like I have over a million. Some of my cousins are really funny. Some are mean, Nice, Scary.

June 10, 2010

Dear Darya,

I have a lot of cousins too! Can you tell me about your favorite cousin and then I will tell you about mine?

Sincerely,
Miss Davis

P.S. Who gave you your bracelets?!

6/18/10

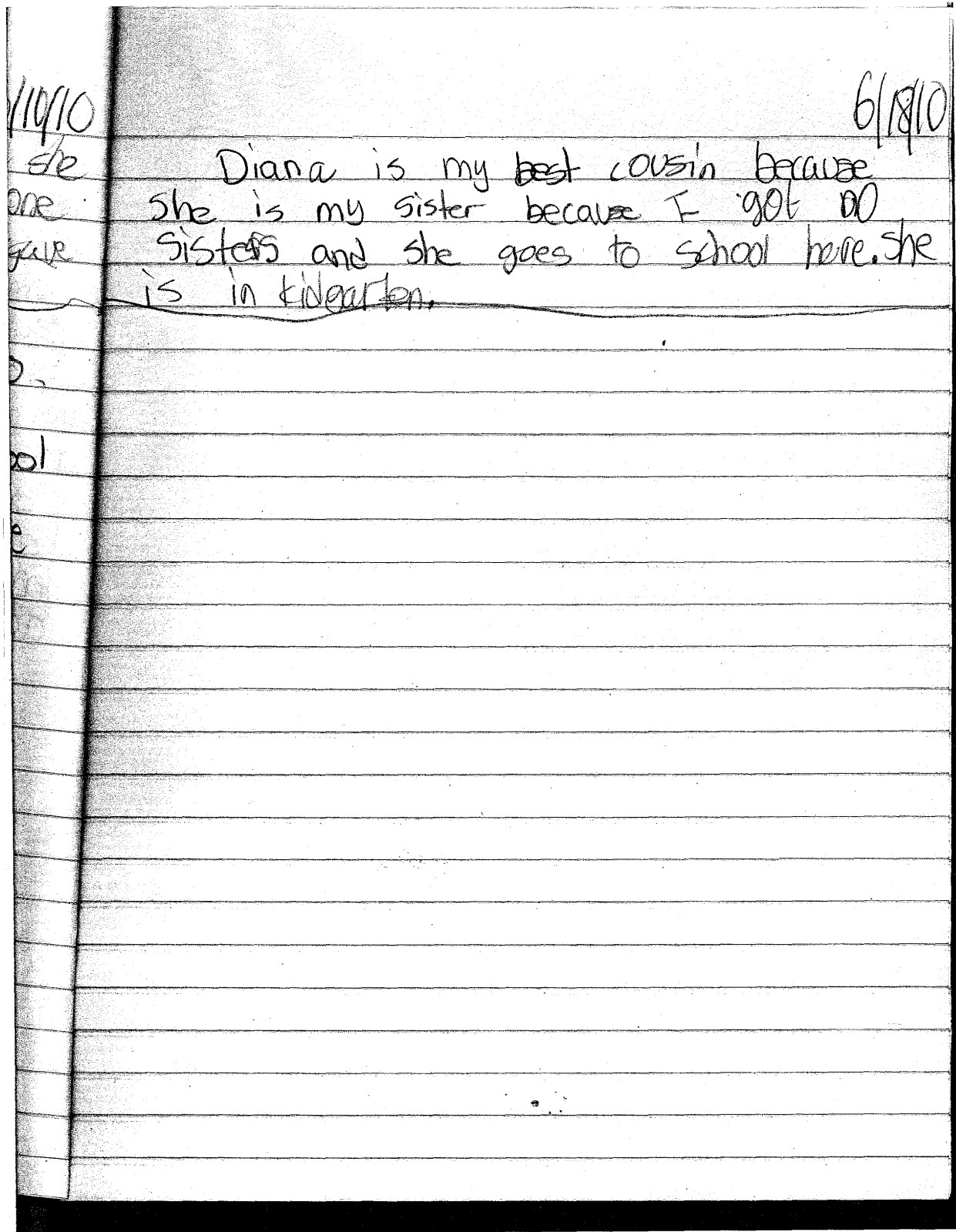
My favorite cousin's name is Diana she is in kindergarten. My mom gave me one of the bracelets, My cousin Diana gave me the other.

June 18, 2010.

Dear Darya,

Does Diana go to school here? What makes her your favorite? My favorite cousin's name is Ashley. She is my favorite because she is the only other girl in my family. I always wanted a sister but never had one so she was kind of like a sister to me.

Sincerely,
Miss Davis



Appendix C: Fato's Journal Entries

Fato

6/7/10

Dear Miss. Davis,

I have a question for you? What is your favorite color and what kind of things you do at home?

June 9, 2010

Dear Fato,

Thank you for writing to me!

My favorite color is purple just like your journal. I like to color things purple and wear purple clothes. What is your favorite color?

When I am home my favorite thing to do is play with my family. We like to go to the park and read books together. What kinds of things do you do with your family?

Sincerely,
Miss Davis

6/9/16

Dear

Dear Miss Davis,

I Play with my family and we go to the
Parks. My favorite color is Purple. I like it because
you can match with it.

big Pl
and a
family
School

June 9, 2016

Dear Fato,

De

What kind of games do you
play at the park? Do you
like the swings and the slide?

We usually play on the playground
and then run around and
play tag.

I am also wondering who is in
your family. I have 2 brothers. Do you
have brothers or sisters?

Your Teacher,
Miss Davis

1/9/10

6/10/10

Dear Miss. Davis,

I Play tag with my family. I usually Play in the big Playground and the little Playground. I have 2 brothers and 1 sister. What do you do at home with your family? What kind of things do you do when you come from School?

June 13, 2010

Dear Fato,

I love playing with my family. We like to do puzzles and read books when we are home. We also like to eat! Sometimes when we are I eating I tell my family funny stories about what happened at school. my favorite food is macaroni and cheese. It is delicious! What is your favorite food?

Sincerely,

Miss Davis

P.S. Capital letters only go at the beginning of sentences 😊

6/18/10

Dear Miss. Davis

I like to eat Cheese and bread. Do you have any
pets at home? How do they look?

Appendix D: Hawa's Journal Entries

Hawa

I have a cat her name is
her she is a girl and she likes
to run and she wiggles her tail
and she is a girl and pretty
then her friend she plays with her
friend outside she is black and white she
has cute faces than me I love her
so much and my family her to in the
world

June 9, 2010

Dear Hawa,

I like cats too and I
like dogs. I have a dog
named Sasha. She is medium
sized and has pointy ears. She
likes to play catch with the
ball. When she is happy she
also wags her tail. I love
her very much. She is a
part of my family.

Another important part of
my family is my son Vaughn.
He is two years old and

full of energy. He likes to
play on the playground
and read books. We have
a lot of fun together. Who
else is in your family?
What do you guys like to
do together?

Your teacher,

MISS DAVIS

I have a cat her name is
hanna She is a girl and she
is sweet and she likes to meow
Dax and I give her food that she
sleep with me She is short and white

June 10, 2010

Dear Hawa,

I am glad you like
your cat so much! I am
sure she feels very loved!
Who else is in your family?
Do you have brothers or
sisters?

Sincerely,

MISS DAVIS

I have sister and brother and they are
nice to me at home my mom here
to house I do not homework at home
and I love them it is long me pass and
be good at school and home & clean
my dog and my twin floor

June 10, 2010

Dear Hawa,

I have two brothers.
One lives nearby and one
lives far away. I like to
go visit the one that lives
near me so our children

can play together. What do
you like to do with your
brothers and sisters?

Sincerely,
Miss Davis

I like to play with my brother and sister
outside because it fun sometimes we
help my mom clean the dish in the room
to that makes me feel happy

June 18, 2010

Dear Hawa,

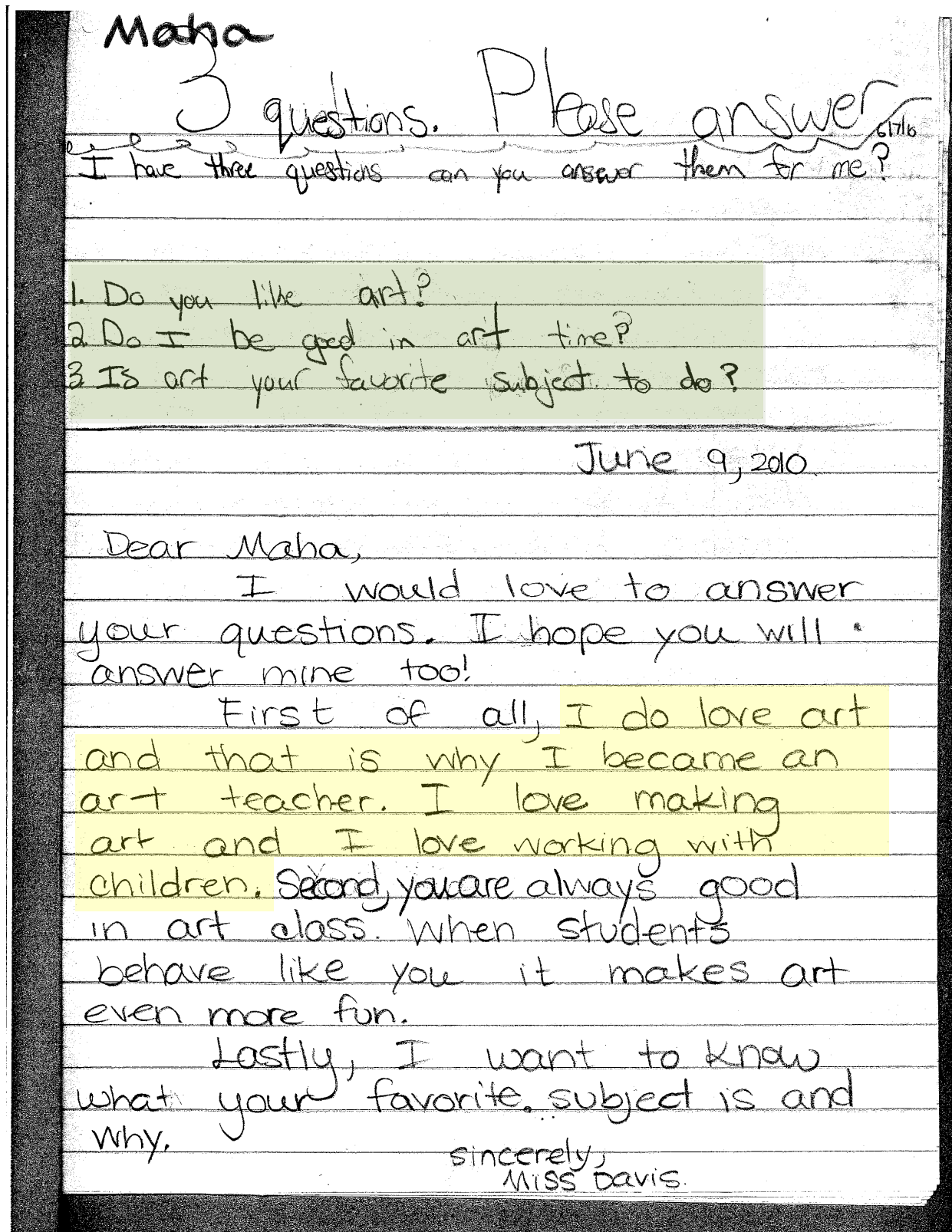
It is nice to help
people. when I help
people I feel happy too.
I think that is why
I became a teacher. Teachers
get to help their students
every day. What kind of
job do you want to
have when you grow up?

From,
Miss Davis

and
clean
and
steel

I help people in my house
and I also help my mom at the dish and
clean my room and my bed the floor
and I put the water to the garden
and it become cool and have a
great summer

Appendix E: Maha's Journal



Dear Miss. Davis,

My favorite subject is gym. Gym is fun because we get to play around and we get to clip the things on the wall. I also like art because drawing and writing is my favorite thing. I also liked when I draw and write fun things in your callroom and when we decorate papers and journals.

sincerely,

Maha Alshuaib,

can you write what is your favorite subject in the art room.

June 10, 2010

Dear Mahay,

Thank you for sharing
your favorite subject with me.

My favorite part of art is
working with clay. I love
making sculptures and vases.

It is also fun to paint
the clay with any type
of designs you like. Can

you tell me about
what you like to do
outside of school?

Your Teacher,
Miss Davis

Appendix F: Mahamudi's Journal Entries

Mahamudi

Do you like to draw too much?

June 9, 2010.

Dear Mahamudi,

I do like to draw a lot! I also like to paint and play with clay. If I had to pick, I would say that clay is my favorite. I like it because you can use it to build things like cups and bowls. What is your favorite part of art? What is your favorite subject of all?

Sincerely,
Miss Davis

Dear Miss Davis,

My favorite subject in art is drawing because you could draw anything you want. You could draw rings, dragons, houses, schools, people, trains, cars, buses, and animals too! That's why my favorite subject in art is drawing. I'll

see you in art Miss. Davis.

Sincerely,
Mahamudi

June 10, 2010

Dear Mahamudi,

I am glad that you like drawing because we do a lot of it in art class! What else do you like to do in school? What do you like to do outside of school?

Your Teacher,
Miss Davis

I like to make things with paper

June 18, 2010.

Dear Mahamudi,

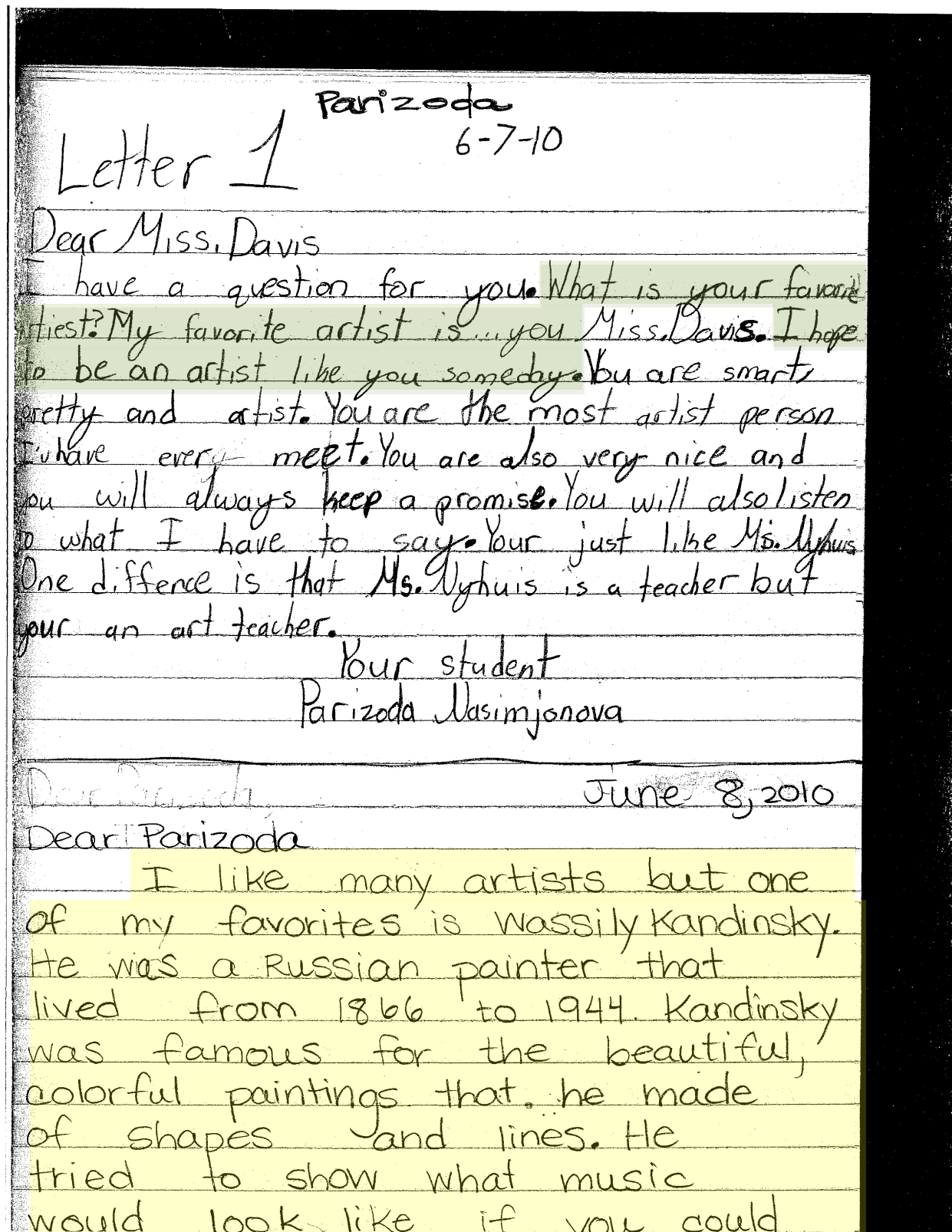
I also like to make kites and am looking forward to going outside to fly them. I think it will be a lot of fun. I wish we could go outside more often. If you could change one thing about our school what would it be?

Sincerely,
Miss Davis.

I would change the rooms. I will put games and food in them.

Do you like to change things?

Appendix G: Parizoda's Journal Entries



see it. I like him because he was different than other painters. He never drew anything real like houses or people.

I also like to draw things that are not real. I like to make designs and doodles of shapes and colors. What kinds of things do you like to make?

Thank you for your compliments! You are also a great artist and a great student. You always come to class willing to help and you always try your best. Another thing that is the same about Miss. Nyhuis and I is that we both like having you in our class!

Your teacher,
Miss Davis

Dear
a bunch
from
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do, ca
will

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you
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For
the
ya

Parizoda

Dear Miss Davis, My favorite art is to do a bunch of crazy things. What kind of painting from Wassily Kandinsky do you like best? Do you have any of his pictures in your room? If you do, can you show me them. I bet they will be cool.

Parizoda student
Parizoda Nasimjonova

I * ♥ * A * R * T *

June 10, 2010

Dear Parizoda,

I would love to show you some of Wassily Kandinsky's art. I think you would really like it.

Is Uzbekistan near Russia?

How old were you when you left there to come to the U.S.? Do you remember it? Do you miss it?

Sincerely,
Miss Davis

Dear Miss Davis

Where are the pictures from Wassily Kandinsky?

Do you think I will be in your class

forever? I hope I am. When are we going to

fly our kites? I think that's the day I am

going to bring a treat. Is it is would you

like one. The treat is going to be a candy

from my country. It's really good. I hope

you like it. I'm not sure if my country is near

your student

Parizoda Nasimjonova

June 18, 2006

Dear Parizoda,

My pictures of Wassily Kandinsky are in my desk. ~

I hope you will be in my class for a very long time!

Unfortunately when you go to high school you won't be anymore. Do you want to

go to college? What do you want to be when you grow up? When I was younger

I wanted to be a doctor
but as I got older I
decided I wanted to be
a teacher. I love teaching
art, especially at our school!

We are going to fly our
kites on Wednesday and I
would love a treat if
you bring them.

From,
Miss Davis

P.S. I am going to find
out if your country is near
Russia. I will let you
know.



Appendix H: Salman's Journal Entries

Salman

617110

I'm from Yemen and I am Arabic. ~~My birthday is on July 10th~~ My birthday is on July 10th. Also I have a twin. Do you have a twin? Are you good in your Art School?

June 10, 2010

Dear Salman,

I think it is so cool that you have a twin! I do not have a twin but I have always wondered what it would be like.

Both of my brothers are much older than me so when I grew up they were not around to play with me. Do you play with your twin a lot? Do you guys have a lot in common?

I am pretty good at school but I go to a school for teachers, not artists.

These journals are actually
part of my homework!
I always try my best and
everything turns out ok! What
is your favorite part of
school?

Sincerely,
MISS DAVIS

Dear Miss Davis,

Me and my twin play alot. We play
video games together, play outside together, and
we play on the computer. We do have
alot in common because we like the
same colors, we like the same games, we
both like the computers too. My
favorite part of school is math because
math is fun and its really easy.

Dear Miss Davis, Are you a
good in your Art school or a teacher?
Is your teacher nice? Is she an
artist like you?

Sincerely,
Salman

June 18, 2010

Dear Salman,

I like how you used question marks at the end of your questions! I like math too! At my school we learn how to be good teachers. We learn how to teach math, science, social studies, and reading. My teacher is not an artist but she is very smart and I learn a lot of things from her. What are you looking forward to this summer?

Your teacher,

MISS Davis,

Dear Miss Davis, I'm looking forward to seeing my 2 brothers, 1 uncle, wife, & homework.

Sincerely,

Salman

Appendix I: Time Spent Writing Table

Student Name	Number of Journal Entries Made	Number of Sentences Written per Entry	Total Time Spent Writing (# Sentences/3 x 5min)
Abdi	4 Entries	13 Sentences	22 Minutes
Darya	5 Entries	22 Sentences	37 Minutes
Fato	4 Entries	13 Sentences	22 Minutes
Hawa	5 Entries	18 Sentences	30 Minutes
Maha	2 Entries	9 Sentences	15 Minutes
Mahamudi	4 Entries	9 Sentences	15 Minutes
Parizoda	4 Entries	33 Sentences	55 Minutes
Salman	3 Entries	13 Sentences	22 Minutes

Average number of entries. 4 entries

Average time spent writing. 27 minutes

Appendix J: Abdi's Journal Analysis Table

Student Name: Abdi		
Information Contained in Journal	Number of Times Referenced in Journal	Comments
Art Interests	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Questions my favorite type of art.- States he likes to draw.
Personal Interests	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Likes going places with his family.
Cultural Background	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Has a large family.
Questions/Information on Art from Teacher	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I stated that I liked ceramics and provided a definition of ceramics.

Appendix K: Darya's Journal Analysis Table

Student Name: Darya		
Information Contained in Journal	Number of Times Referenced in Journal	Comments
Art Interests	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Discussed her bracelets/jewelry.
Personal Interests	0	
Cultural Background	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Tells about a family celebration.- Has a large family.
Questions/Information on Art from Teacher	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I question why her bracelets are important to her.

Appendix L: Fato's Journal Analysis Table

Student Name: Fato		
Information Contained in Journal	Number of Times Referenced in Journal	Comments
Art Interests	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Asks my favorite color.- States that she likes purple because you can match with it.
Personal Interests	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Likes to play with her family.- Likes to go to the park and playground.- Likes to eat cheese and bread.
Cultural Background	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Has 2 brothers and 1 sister.
Questions/Information on Art from Teacher	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I tell her my favorite color and ask hers.

Appendix M: Hawa's Journal Analysis Table

Student Name: Hawa		
Information Contained in Journal	Number of Times Referenced in Journal	Comments
Art Interests	0	
Personal Interests	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Likes cats.- Likes to play with her siblings.- Likes helping others.
Cultural Background	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Has 1 sister and 1 brother.- There is emphasis at home on homework and chores.
Questions/Information on Art from Teacher	0	

Appendix N: Maha's Journal Analysis Table

Student Name: Maha		
Information Contained in Journal	Number of Times Referenced in Journal	Comments
Art Interests	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Questions my love for art.- Asks if she is a good artist.- States she like drawing, writing, and decorating things in art class.- Asks me if art is my favorite subject.
Personal Interests	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Likes gym and physical activity.
Cultural Background	0	
Questions/Information on Art from Teacher	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I tell her the reasons I became an art teacher.- I discuss clay, sculptures, and vases.

Appendix O: Mahamudi's Journal Analysis Table

Student Name: Mahamudi		
Information Contained in Journal	Number of Times Referenced in Journal	Comments
Art Interests	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Asks if I like to draw, "too much."- States his favorite part of art is drawing and that he likes to draw ninjas, dragons, houses, schools, people, trains, buses, cars, and animals.- Likes making paper kites.
Personal Interests	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Likes games and food.
Cultural Background	0	
Questions/Information on Art from Teacher	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- I tell him I like to draw, paint, and make things with clay, then go into further detail on clay.- I ask him what his favorite part of art is.- I state that I am glad he likes drawing.- I elaborate on kites.

Appendix P: Parizoda's Journal Analysis Table

Student Name: Parizoda		
Information Contained in Journal	Number of Times Referenced in Journal	Comments
Art Interests	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asks my favorite artist. - States that she wants to be an artist. - Says she likes, "crazy art." - Asks about Wassily Kandinsky and shows interest in finding out more about his work. - Writes, "I LOVE ART."
Personal Interests	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Wants to go to college.
Cultural Background	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talks about candy from her home country. - Says that she does not know where Uzbekistan (her home country) is located.
Questions/Information on Art from Teacher	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I tell her my favorite artist is Kandinsky and provide his background. - I state that I like to draw and ask what she likes to draw. - I affirm she is already a great artist. - I write that I will show her pictures of Kandinsky's work. - I ask her if Uzbekistan is located near Russia. - I discuss what we will do next art class. - I tell her that I will find out where Uzbekistan is located.

Appendix Q: Salman's Journal Analysis Table

Student Name: Salman		
Information Contained in Journal	Number of Times Referenced in Journal	Comments
Art Interests	1	- Asks if I am good at art school.
Personal Interests	1	- Likes video games, playing outside, and computers.
Cultural Background	2	- Tells that he is Arabic and from Yemen. - Extended family is important.
Questions/Information on Art from Teacher	0	